

July 13, 1858.

Dr. Gray, F.R.S., V.P., in the Chair.

The following papers were read:—

1. ON A NEW SPECIES OF PTARMIGAN. BY JOHN GOULD,
F.R.S., V.P.Z.S., ETC.

Everything which tends to increase our knowledge of so important a group of birds as the *Tetraonidae* must be regarded with especial interest; and hence I have great pleasure in exhibiting to the meeting a skin, imperfect though it be, of what I believe to be a new species of this family. I may remark that, while many specific names have been given to some species of this group, others appear to have been passed over unnoticed, of which latter the bird now before us is an instance in point, for I believe that it has not as yet received a specific appellation. It is to be regretted that the specimen is not in a better state of preservation; it furnishes, however, sufficient materials for a good description. Its native habitat is Spitzbergen, where I believe it is plentiful. It was brought to this country by Edward Evans, Esq., of Neath, who shot it during a visit to that part of the world in the summer of 1856; the specimen, which is that of a female, is of course in its summer plumage, as at no other season are these high northern lands visited by travellers. In size it considerably exceeds our Common Ptarmigan, from which it differs very remarkably in the colouring of the tail; the basal half of nearly all the feathers being white and the apical half black, narrowly fringed with white at the extreme tips. As is the case with all other Ptarmigans in their summer plumage, the primaries are white; in this species most of the secondaries and the wing-coverts are also white; the remainder of the plumage is rayed with black and ochreous yellow, the black predominating on the upper surface, while the feathers of the flanks are beautifully and equally barred with these two colours; the feet are white, the nails jet-black, and the bill brown. The total length of the bird is about 16 inches, of its wing $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, tail $5\frac{1}{2}$, tarsi $1\frac{3}{4}$. I propose to call this species *Lagopus hemileucurus*.

With much kindness Mr. Evans sent me the only skin he procured, accompanied by permission to describe and make any other use of it I pleased, and the following note respecting it:—

“The skin sent is the only one I have from Spitzbergen, though I shot many. The bird was so plentiful, that, thinking I could always procure examples, I neglected to preserve any at the time, and was obliged to come away at last with only this one. The hen birds had all assumed their summer plumage; but the males had not changed a feather, though the old ones, which had become very ragged and dirty, would almost fall off on being touched. I started one hen from her nest, or rather from the little dry hollow where

she had collected a few stems of grass, and found two eggs; these were all we met with; the nest was placed in the high fields where in the dry parts scarcely any vegetation is to be seen, while the swampy portions where the snow had melted were covered with coarse grass and the dwarf willow, which is the only thing approaching to a shrub on these barren treeless islands. The specimen sent was shot on the 27th of June on the south shore of Ia Sound in about $77\frac{3}{4}^{\circ}$ N. lat.

“The neighbouring country consisted of a belt of swampy ground covered with rank grass, with high, rugged, and barren mountains rising behind, covered with snow, except on their sharp ridges and steep sides; these mountains, which are interspersed with vast snow-clad plains, stretch away for miles inland, and rise into beautiful cones in the distance; here and there in a few sheltered spots a scanty supply of small flowers were to be found, mostly belonging to the following families: *Draba*, *Ranunculus*, *Saxifraga*, &c. The dark grey rocks were covered with lichens in great variety, but of a gloomy and sombre hue, in strict keeping with the wildness of the scene; here too the reindeer moss grew in great abundance. I may remark that the Ptarmigans were so tame, that we could easily have knocked them down with a long stick, doubtless from being so unaccustomed to the intrusion of human visitors.”

I cannot conclude without expressing a hope that some person visiting the country, such as the noble Lord Dufferin, will think of our museums as well as of gratifying their palates, and send us specimens of this new species, which would be highly prized.

2. DESCRIPTIONS OF TWO NEW SPECIES OF THE FAMILY HIRUN- DINIDÆ. BY J. GOULD, F.R.S., V.P.Z.S., ETC.

One an *Atticora* from Guatemala, the other a *Chelidon* from Cashmere.

ATTICORA PILEATA, Gould.

Size of the Sand Martin (*Cotyle riparia*); crown of the head, ear-coverts, and back of the neck black, with bluish reflexions; back deep brown, becoming darker on the upper tail-coverts; wings blackish-brown, darkest on the shoulders; tail moderately forked, and of the same colour as the wing; throat mottled with dark brown and greyish-white; breast white, blending into brown on the flanks; under tail-coverts largely developed, and of a dark purplish-brown; bill and feet dark purplish-brown; thighs brown, gartered with white.

Total length, $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches; wing, $3\frac{3}{4}$; tail, $2\frac{1}{2}$; tarsi, $\frac{3}{8}$.

Hab. Guatemala.

Remark.—This bird is much smaller, but is of precisely the same form as the *Atticora fasciata*. Science is indebted to George Ure Skinner, Esq., for the introduction of this new and interesting Swallow.